

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW #464-2

with

Ruth Ishibashi Yamaguchi (RY)

July 16, 1992

Pearl City, O`ahu

BY: Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Mrs. Ruth Yamaguchi at her home in Pearl City, Honolulu, O`ahu, on July 16, 1992. The interviewer is Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto.

Okay, for today's interview, we're gonna be continuing about your life at Hind-Clarke Dairy homestead. And I know that we just spoke about your playing with Kuakini Cummins, and his visiting and eating at your house and everything. And I was wondering, what other children did you play with at Hind-Clarke Dairy Homesteads?

RY: Well actually, the Cummins family was the only Caucasian family that was real close to the Hind-Clarke Dairy Homestead, 'cause they were at the entrance of the road. But the rest of them were mostly Japanese, until a Filipino family moved in, in one of the homes. And we also played with Juan and his brother. But the rest of them was mostly all Japanese.

But then, our home had a big lot with a big, big---they say it's a *milo* plant. It was a huge, huge tree and we had a swing on it. So it seemed as though all the neighborhood kids came to play in our yard, 'cause if there's gonna be a baseball game, the only yard is our yard that you can play baseball. So they would come over to play baseball. And as far as I can remember, most of the kids came to our house to play. And if they were gonna go to the beach to go swimming, they would stop by, you know, "Come on, let's go to the beach." And then you just crossed Kalaniana`ole Highway and go through this lot, through the bushes and you go swimming. There were a lot of homes. And most of the kids would come down the road, pass our house, you know, go down to the beach. And that was one of the summer things that we used to always do, go down to the beach to go swimming.

MK: And what other things did you folks do as kids?

RY: Oh, we used to---I know my brothers, they used to always play cowboys and Indians, that was one of the things, you know. And, oh, there were lot of kids playing different things, like they would make stilts with sticks and that was one of the games they would play. All of them with the stilts and trying to

walk around, I remember that. But the road was so junky that it was real hard to walk on the road with the stilts. So they would all come in our yard to walk around on the stilts.

And another one was—I can't remember what that sticky plant is. It's a bean, you peel the bean and it's got sticky gluey thing. They would put it on their feet and any kind of cans, they would put that on and put that underneath our feet and go clop-clop-clop-clopping. And that was one of the games. I can't remember what that plant was, but it had this gooey, sticky thing. You could actually---it would stick on your feet and on the can. And until it wears out, you could be walking around on that. That was one of the things, yeah. Except for New Year's, everybody played fireworks. Everybody visited everybody's home. (We also played with marbles. Sometimes we would have a very big game going on with marbles.)

MK: And you were saying that most of them were Japanese kids.

RY: Most of them were Japanese family in the homestead. Now, there was another housing that belonged to Hind-Clarke Dairy, but those were mostly for bachelors. There were homes, but it seemed as though they were shared by more than one person, and usually it was males. And there were a lot of Filipinos in those groups, (and) Mrs. [*Tomoe*] Fukamoto used to do the cooking and the laundry for them.

MK: And those, you know, Japanese kids that you were playing with, they were all nisei?

RY: Most of 'em, right, right. Most of them were nisei, except the Kawano family. The Kawano family, the parents [*Toshio and Yoshio Kawano, brothers who resided together*], were nisei, so their children that's almost the same age as we were, they were third generation. But I can't remember any other family that was third generation here. All I know was the Kawano family.

MK: And like, when you folks played, were there like Japanese words used or was it mostly English and pidgin [*Hawai'i Creole English*]?

RY: It was mostly Pidgin English [*Hawai'i Creole English*], but a lot of them used Japanese words. So if we understood them, fine, you know, we know what. There were times we have to run home, find out what it is, run back so we know what they're talking about. But that's where the problem was, because *Babachan* knew a lot of Hawaiian, you know, because she had a lot of Hawaiian friends and she picked up a lot of Hawaiian words. And that's where the confusion came in for my family, where a lot of the Hawaiian words that we thought was Japanese was not Japanese. And then, there were some Okinawan families, yeah, like Mrs. Tamashiro, who was such a nice lady. She was such a nice neighbor. And there was a Oshiro family, Shizue Oshiro used to be my best friend. But then, their parents used different words, and it seemed as though they were Okinawan words, and we just could understand some of those words. And other kids could not understand it too. But even as early as---that was in the thirties, in those days, most of them knew who the

Okinawan families were and it seemed as though a lot of times, they did not, the families did not want them to play with Okinawan families. But funny, we were neighbors and we always played with them. We went in and out of their homes, so I was surprised as one time I was told, you know, "Oh, we're not to play with you because you play with Okinawan kids."

But you know, in those days, you didn't know one name from another. And I remember, I went home to ask, "You know, I was told they cannot play with me because I play with Okinawans." I said, "Mama, what is that?"

I remember going home to ask. And my mother told me that, oh, Okinawan families are like the Oshiros and Tamashiros. And there was Shoken family, but there was only one daughter and one son, and they kept to themselves. They're real quiet family. They didn't have a mother, but they kept to themselves. But that's when I found out that even though they're Japanese, they're Okinawan families, yeah. Until then, I didn't know the difference until somebody told me, "We're not to play with you because you play with Okinawan family."

MK: So after you were told that, what did you do?

RY: My mother said it's okay to play with them, you know. They don't want to play with you, fine, you know. Because the Tamashiro family was such nice family. And I remember Mrs. Tamashiro to this day, because she used to feed her children something like a rice pudding, you know, in the morning. It's made with rice and she puts sugar in it and milk in it. And I thought that was the most delicious thing I ever tasted. So I would always try to make the excuse to go there early to wait for the kids. And she would invite me in to have breakfast. And I wanted to get there early, you know, to wait so she would offer to, you know. And then my parents found out what I was doing, and they put a stop to it. My father said, "Mrs. Tamashiro, you know, is a widow." She was widowed. Her husband used to work for Hind-Clarke Dairy, but he died young. He said, "You're not to do that." So I couldn't go there anymore.

And then Mrs. Tamashiro found out, so she said—you know, she's so nice—she'd say, "It don't matter. Let her come and eat with the kids."

My father said, "You're not to do that."

But you know when you're young, you don't know who's struggling and who's not. So I couldn't eat that anymore. So I used to tell, "Mama, why don't you learn to make that?"

MK: It was like a close community then, yeah?

RY: It was, it was, yeah. It was a close community. We would know who is sick, who died, and the whole community would go to help. And I remember, there used to be a---my grandma and my mom used to always talk about it too, that within that community, there used to be a *tanomoshi* group. And if it

was your turn to host it, I remember all the people come in to your house and there would be a lot of talking. And then my father said, no, he'll bid for the *tanomoshi*. And then that's when we first found out about *tanomoshi*. And he would say that, "No, if it's your turn, you get the money," you know. And if---you can use it for anything. And then the next time, it will be somebody else's turn. And I remember one time, I think it was my father's turn, but there was a family who was real sick, there was a member who was real sick and they needed the money. And so he said, oh, he gave it up, you know, to let that family have it first. And so I found out, oh, that's how the community helped each other. If there was a death in the family and that family needed the *tanomoshi*, you know, somebody would be willing to give it to that family.

MK: Were there any other organizations among the Japanese over there?

RY: I remember my grandma used to go to this church. And I found out that she used to belong in the Fukuoka *Kenjinkai*. But then, of course, I think when the war started that disbanded, but then we had moved away anyway. But then, my father, later on, when it got reactivated, reorganized, he was in it. And he told me, yeah, he went in it because his parents used to belong in it.

MK: Fukuoka *Kenjinkai*.

RY: Fukuoka *Kenjinkai*, mm hm. But in those days, they used to belong to a lot of church groups.

MK: What church group was your grandmother in?

RY: I remember my grandma used to go to that Palolo Hongwanji. And one day, because the Fukuoka *Kenjinkai* usually had the meetings there, somebody told me, "Hey, isn't that your father's name up there?"

I said, "Where?"

And there's a wall with all these names listed. I said, "I wonder why my father's name is up there."

They said, "Oh, it's because he made a donation."

I said, "Oh, is that what you . . ."

And the man told me, "Yeah, you know, when they make a big donation, your name goes up there."

I said, "Oh."

So I happened to ask my father, and he said, yeah, because his mother had belonged to the church so long, you know, he made a donation in her name.

MK: Oh, I see. So your grandmother was active in the Palolo Hongwanji.

RY: Mm hm, mm hm, yeah.

MK: So did she go to church on a regular basis?

RY: I think so because I remember my father always taking her somewhere, and she would get dressed up and go. And I would say, "*Bachan*, where did you go?"

She said, "*Otera ittayo*" ("I went to the temple"). So I take it, you know, it was that church.

MK: How about your dad and you folks? Did you folks go to the [*Palolo*] Hongwanji when you were small?

RY: I remember we used to go, not for services maybe, but for---I remember my grandma wanted to have a service for my grandfather. And I guess every so many years they would have a service and we had to go and grandma would say, no, we have to go. And my mom would dress us and we all had to go. And we used to go, get so restless because the *Bonsan* is praying, and "When is it gonna end? Can we go outside?"

My father would say, "No, you just sit there! Don't you go outside now."

And we thought that—for us, you know, even if it's one hour, it was like a half-a-day service. We were so bored, and it's so long. And I remember they used to take flowers and I remember they used to take *mochi* or---I remember one time, my father taking bag of rice. And then I found out, a lot of offerings are given to the church. Like in rice, or in sake, yeah. Because I remember seeing a lot of bag of rice sometimes. I say, "Oh, you know, *Babachan*, look at all the rice, *dare ga taberu no*" ("Oh, you know, Grandma, look at all the rice, who's going to eat it")?

And I thought it was that they were gonna have a party or something, and they were getting the rice ready. I said, "Oh, when is the *yobare*?" you know.

My grandma said, "*Yobare de wa nai, are wa Bonsan no rice yo*" ("It's not a party. That's the priest's rice").

I really thought we were gonna have a party or something. Bags and bags of rice. So I thought they were getting ready for a party. But, no, I found out it's, people used to make, rather than money, they used to give the rice or sake.

MK: You know, you mentioned, like, your dad would give *mochi* sometimes. Did you folks used to have a *mochitsuki*, or something like that?

RY: Yeah, I remember before they used to *tsuku mochi*, you know. They would---I remember, I think it was Mr. Morita who had a *kama* and they used to all get together and *tsuku mochi*, yeah.

MK: And on what occasions would you have a *mochitsuki*?

RY: It was New Year's, before New Year's.

MK: Did you folks do other Japanese things, like Boys' Day celebrations, or Girls' Day celebrations?

RY: Oh yes. Because I remember my grandmother saying that my older sister, because she was the first girl, she had a lot of dolls. And so I asked, "Well, where's my dolls?" you know.

But she told me that usually it's for the first girl. It was in those days, I guess, they couldn't afford for every little girl, so they would take out all the dolls for each time, you know, a Girls' Day came. And I wanted to know which was my doll. And I remember my sister saying, "That's not your doll, that's my dolls."

And I cried, because I told *Babachan*, "Where's my doll?" I thought everybody was gonna get a doll.

She said, "*Minna no doll yo*" ("They're everyone's dolls").

But my sister said, "No, that's my dolls."

So then when I got to learn that, if you're the third girl, you get all the hand-me-downs, and you have, that's not your thing, it's your sister's thing, but then she's gonna share with you, but you cannot claim it as your own. And I remember my brother below me now, he was the first boy child. My mother said it was such a big celebration in the family because my grandmother. My grandmother, at Boys' Day had several banners, but in those days, the whole community gave something for the child.

MK: Oh.

RY: I remember, he had so many fish flying, you know. And in those days, they had those banners. Flag, a long, long flag. And they put it on a post and they had several of it for my brother. But I found out almost everybody in the community would bring you a gift.

MK: Oh.

RY: And he, being the first boy, had a lot of, you know, dolls and I remember those fishes and those banners flying.

MK: So your family did celebrate things like *Oshogatsu*, Boys' Day, Girls' Day.

RY: Mm hm, mm hm, yeah. And I remember on Girls' Day, my family had certain kind of *mochi*, or *manju*, or whatever, you know. And I remember waiting for that day because we get to eat those things. But the longer you wait, it seemed as though it never came. And then Boys' Day, they had different kind of---I remember they had different kind of *mochi*. Even the Girls' Day, I remember those triangle, pink-looking, and white ones. And Boys' Day was

different. I remember, I think my brother's, he used to have this green-looking seaweed. And nobody wanted eat that, when you a child. Oh, it didn't taste so good. But now you wish you had those. I found out, I think it was seaweed, yeah.

MK: Oh, interesting. And then, did you folks do things like the Emperor's Day, *Tencho-setsu*?

RY: I don't remember that one. Maybe somebody in the neighborhood did. Maybe my grandmother did, but maybe that's when she used to. . . . No but, to celebrate that, you wouldn't put things on the *butsudan*. I don't remember that, Emperor's Day.

MK: And I think you mentioned you went to Japanese[-*language*] school, yeah.

RY: Mm hm.

MK: Which Japanese school did you go to?

RY: Wai`alae Japanese[-*language*] School, yeah.

MK: And what were your feelings about Japanese school, going to Japanese school?

RY: Oh, I didn't like it. I guess because my parents spoke English to us, and it was, oh, it was so difficult for us. I remember it was so difficult. And there was another third generation girl with us, but she was real brilliant. She was---although she was a third generation, she was really, really good in Japanese. And that used to amaze me, because I remember, I asked Harriet, whether they spoke Japanese at home. She said, no, her parents spoke only English. And naturally, now, she went to Ali`iolani School, that was an English standard school. So she was real good in her English, plus in Japanese. And that really amazed me to know, and I remember. But then, as I used to think, oh, why am I such a confused child that I cannot grasp Japanese? And I used to always go to my grandma, "Grandma, what is this?" you know. "*Bochan*, what is this?"

And she would explain, but by the time I went to school, I had forgotten.

MK: And then how many of your siblings, in your family, went to Japanese school?

RY: My sister said, now, she went through to the ninth grade, my oldest sister. My second sister is the one who had problems, and when the teacher called her a dumb Japanese, and she came home crying, my father said, "You don't need to go."

And I had wished the teacher would call me a dumb Japanese so I didn't have to go to school. And I said, "Oh, you know, Dad can I drop out too?"

He said, "No, you go."

And every day I would wish the teacher would call me dumb, you know, so I could go home and cry to my father. But in my sister's case, it was a man teacher, I remember, called her that. And it would be just my luck, I never had a man teacher. And the woman teacher would be so patient. And she knew I was third generation. But I think like, in my whole class, I think there must have been about three or four of us. And she would tell me, "If the others can do it, you can do it." Oh! (Chuckles)

But I remember, it was so hard for me in Japanese school.

MK: Did the younger ones go too, your younger siblings?

RY: No, I don't remember my brothers going to Japanese school.

MK: And then, in Japanese school, you know, some people have told me they were taught ethics, you know, *shushin*.

RY: Oh, and manners?

MK: Yeah, manners, and rules.

RY: I remember that was so strict. Manners was so strict. And as soon as you go to class, you have to stand up and bow, you know, yeah. And you always had to greet *sensei*. Yeah, I remember that. Manners were really, really strict. They were real strict. And another strict thing I remember was sewing. On Saturdays we had to go sewing, and I struggled. And good thing *Babachan* would sometimes tell me, "No, no, no." She used to be strict in that she would make me take it off, because she said it's trying to finish, you take the biggest stitch. She said, "No, no." And she would teach me the right way. And there's a right way of doing it where Japanese do not take the *hari* out.

MK: Oh.

RY: But to this day, I remember *Babachan* saying, "You don't take the needle out." You know, to pull it out, to get the string. See, "You don't do it." So I go to the very end until I pull it out. To this day, I have that habit now. I never, never pull the needle out.

MK: That's from Japanese school training and your grandmother.

RY: Yeah, yeah. I used to take the needle out, and go through like that. And *Babachan* would say that's why my stitches go crooked, because I take the needle out. And she used to make me take it all off again. And, you know, when you're a child, you're gonna make this big knot, make sure it won't come off. You know, she said, "You don't make that big knot." And she would teach me how to make the knot. So to this day, I have certain things that I remember *Babachan*, and I appreciate that now, yeah. I really, really appreciate that.

MK: Kind of stayed with you, yeah.

RY: Yeah. Especially that needle, not to take it out. And I notice your stitches go straighter, yeah. It doesn't have that slant in this here. And I was surprised that my girlfriend noticed that.

MK: So when you were small, did you take any other Japanese culture-type lessons? Like some girls had, like, *odori*, dancing, or they had flower arrangement, or some even learned calligraphy. Did your family ever do those things?

RY: No, we did not. We did not. I remember a lot of the friends went to---I think in Japanese school they taught---I thought my sister took flower arrangement. I think there was a teacher teaching that, I remember. But I was only in that sewing, and I used to hate it, until I made my first kimono, after struggling. I was so proud of that kimono. Yeah, yeah. I think that material is called *yukata*. Yeah. I finally finished it. And I was so proud.

MK: And, like, in your family, did you folks wear kimonos on a regular basis?

RY: No. Only on New Year's. It seemed my grandmother, when she went to Japan, she brought back kimono for us, and we used to treasure that. And I still have a kimono of my childhood, yeah. And Grandma—in those days, there used to be *Hanamatsuri*, or something. And I remember Grandma entered me in that, and they paint your face, and they put the cap on, you know, in the kimono. And I was so frightened that I thought that we had to march and they gonna take me away. And I cried and cried and cried that I wanna get out, you know. And *Babachan* would say, “No, no, no, you stay there!”

And we had to all walk in a group, yeah. We're all dressed up and with this little hat, with all this little things, the flowers. And my mother had kept my kimono for me, and I still have it, yeah. When we had packed our things, things that we weren't gonna use, we had packed it in certain boxes. And for me, those things were not important, and I left it outside of the house [*after the family moved to Pu`uloa*]. My mother would say each day, we would bring in boxes and unpack. But then when we started school, we were so busy I didn't have time to go look to, except for what I wanted. And I think it was left outside of the home and my father was able to bring it (when we had to evacuate). That's why we still have my grandmother, my mother's, that kimono with the *mon*, and my kimono. So in that part, I guess we were fortunate that I didn't think it was important, and I left it outside. And I would tell my mother, “No, no, no, we don't need all those things yet. We'll look through it later.”

And my mother, being worried about my brother in the hospital, and she wasn't in the best of health, so she wasn't about to bring those things in to look through. She would just bring whatever my brothers needed or whatever we needed. And I guess that was one of the fortunate things that happened, that we still had those family heirloom, how little it is.

MK: It was fortunate that it wasn't brought into the house.

RY: Like my grandmother's things that she had from Japan. When you're a kid, you know, you're not gonna think about those things. "Oh no, *Babachan*, we don't need that, leave it there yet." And we left lot of the things outside. (That's why) my father was able to bring it, (but) it turned out to be a family heirloom. That's why we have lot of *Babachan* things yet, old things, yeah.

MK: That's fortunate, yeah.

RY: Yeah. So from one misfortune, a fortunate thing did happen, yeah. So there is a rice pot with that outer lip, I remember. Well, I remember Grandma having more than one. So the one that we were able to save, because my youngest brother saves antiques. We made sure and gave it to him. And there was an old kerosene lamp. It's made out of glass, and even where the kerosene goes in, you can see it right through (the) glass. And so, we said, the only one who should have it is my brother, the youngest one, because when *Babachan* was old and she was already sick, he was the only one left at home with my mother, and he helped take care of my grandmother, with my mother. So we said he deserves it, so we gave it to him. He's got Grandma's things.

MK: Oh. So I guess it was, like you said, a fortunate thing.

RY: Yeah, so when I look back, I think, well, out of the misfortune, you know, some good things came out (of it).

MK: And you know, I know I asked if you folks wore kimonos, how about your grandmother? Was she still wearing kimonos back then?

RY: I've never seen my grandmother in kimono (as an everyday wear), except when she wanted to go to church or---other than that, she had those old-fashioned clothes. Those old-fashioned clothes was, there was opening in the front, you had a button or a snap, and sleeve, about quarter-sleeve, and it's just like a sack clothes, you know, one-piece clothes, and just with a collar. She always wore those. Or she had those wrap-around *hakama*. Yeah, wrap-around *hakama*, and sort of like a shirt, blouse. And she always had an apron on.

MK: Always working.

RY: Yeah. She always had that apron on, yeah. And no matter what, she always, I remember seeing her with an apron. I guess so that the clothes wouldn't get dirty. But kimono, not unless there was an occasion that she wanted to go to church or somewhere. She didn't, I've never seen her in a kimono. And even then, she would have one of those dressier dress. She would go visiting with that dress.

MK: And I know you went Japanese school, yeah. For your English-language school, I know you went to Wai`alae, and you talked about some of the kids there. But how about the teachers there, how were they? Would you

remember some of their names, or anything particular about them?

RY: I remember Mrs. Eklund, she was really, really nice. And there was a Mrs. Nelson, and she was more of an elderly woman, but she was so patient. And she was really, really nice. Mrs. Eklund was more on the perky side. She always dashing around, but she was real funny, but she was also nice. Those two teachers I remember because they never, ever brought up any racial things. Well, she didn't care whether you Chinese, you Hawaiian, yeah. They never brought race up, I remember.

MK: And you said at Kaimuki, so you were about eighth grade or older?

RY: I was already in the eighth grade.

MK: And then as a youngster, I was wondering, how much education did you eventually finish? Like, how many years did you actually complete of school?

RY: I think I went to ninth grade and I think I was in the tenth grade, I was working and going to school. But then, I remember in April, in the tenth grade, I dropped out.

MK: Why did you drop out?

RY: Because I saw my father struggling so much. Because the evacuation [*of Ruth Yamaguchi's family during World War II*] and everything had set him back so much. And I remember that he had medical bills to pay on my brother who was constantly (ill). He was in the hospital from the time that he was born until sometime in October, we were able to bring him home. But then in November, he went back into the hospital. And I remember, December 7, he wasn't at home, until my mother was so upset. She was so sure that, being so close to Pearl Harbor and with all that bombing and everything, we were going to die. She said, "No, bring baby home."

And I remember he couldn't go on that day, it was too dangerous. And he went (to the hospital) next day, to bring the baby home. And my mother's thought was that if we're gonna die, you know, she want the baby to be with us, go with us.

MK: And . . .

RY: And I know he had a lot of doctor bills to pay and everything. And so I decided that I would help out. But the lady [*who wanted to employ Ruth Yamaguchi*]*—the lady she was desperate [for hired help]*. She was a divorcee, and she was a secretary to one of the vice presidents of Castle & Cooke [*Ltd.*].

MK: Oh.

RY: So she did have a good job, but then she had two boys. So I worked for my room and board, and she would pay me. But then, she was able to get me

into [*Dietz*] Commercial School while working and going to school. She made arrangement, that she would keep me, I would help her out with the kids and the work, yet I would go to school. And I would be, it would be enough time that I would leave the school, pick up the kids and come home. So she made that arrangement. But it was quite hard going to commercial school just like that. But that . . .

MK: So, how long did you go to commercial school?

RY: That was for a short while [*approximately, six months*], until the landlady of that court that she lived in mentioned about a full-time job that I could get.

MK: Oh.

RY: She [*the landlady*] says she could get me in now, so then I told my father about it. And so I told (my employer) about it. So she said, well, give her enough time for her to find somebody. So I think it took another two weeks, she did find an elderly woman that would live with her. She [*the elderly woman*] did not have any family, and she said she would move in with her and help her. And so she told me to go, go apply for the job. And would you believe it, I got the job. I couldn't believe it! I figured, well, I'll go part-time to school yet, hang in. They might only take me for a part-time [*job*]. But then . . .

MK: Okay, you can continue.

RY: So when I realized that they wanted someone full-time, and I was able to get the job, I just continued on, working full-time.

MK: And, how about your sisters, your older sisters, how much education were they able to get?

RY: My older sister [*Gladys*] was working and going to commercial school. She went to business school, and she graduated from the business school. My second sister [*Helen*] now, I think right out of---I'm trying to think now. I think she quit it just before she graduated, to help out too.

MK: And how about your brothers?

RY: My brothers all graduated from high school. Richard went into the service after high school. Then Irwin graduated from St. Louis [*High School*] and went into the service. Now, Tommy also graduated, then he went into the [*U.S.*] Air Force. But then, of course, the war was over, by the time they went into the service. I think my brother, Richard, went into the service and the war ended, but he had volunteered, so he had to stay in four years. Then my brother, Irwin, also volunteered, so he stayed in too. Then Tommy, Tommy graduated from school and he went into the [*U.S.*] Air Force. And he also volunteered. But now, Richard, after getting out of the service, he lived in California and he went to—I remember, he was attending college at night. Then Tommy also lived on the Mainland with Richard. And he went to Northrop Institute.

And now, Tommy was the one who was the pilot. So he continued going to school while working too. And after he got married, he also went to instructors' school, because he found out that, as an instructor, you could get better pay. So he was instructing for a while, until this Mississippi chemical company was looking for a pilot. And I think the pay was pretty good, and he went to work for them. But then, that's when he was in a plane crash and he died.

Now, Kenny, that's the youngest one, who was—I always thought he was on the brink of death, more than being alive. He graduated, he went on to University of Hawai'i. And he was an art student. Then he won a scholarship to a school in New York. So he went off to New York, on the scholarship. And he lived in New York for a while, then he went into (the service). By then the Vietnam War started, so he volunteered. And I think his idea was that he would go to Vietnam, see action. But he got stuck in the—with an intelligence group. So he never ever got to Vietnam anyway, no matter how much he wanted to go to Vietnam. He got stuck with this intelligence group and it seemed as though he had to travel a lot with the group. Trying to interview Cubans. I remember once, he said that he had to go to Canada, somewhere around the border of Maine and the Canadian [border]. And he found out that, oh, those people were very suspicious of him, being an Oriental. And I think he was doing some intelligence work and army thought that being Japanese, they might open up to him. He said it was very difficult, they're real suspicious people, yeah. I remember him saying that.

MK: And, you know, I was wondering, were the children, all of you, able to fulfill the kinds of expectations that you had for your lives?

RY: Well, I guess my brothers did. I'm sure my brothers did.

MK: And then, like, what kind of expectations did your parents have for you folks, in terms of schooling, careers?

RY: Well, my father thought that, you know, most of us probably would have gone on to school. But I was---at that time of my life, I wasn't disappointed that I had to quit school to help out. When I found a full-time job, oh, I thought I was so lucky. Then continued on that lot of my supervisors, in fact, all the supervisors were Caucasian. But I was surprised they encouraged you to take the classes, or there would be so many manuals to read, you know. "Read that manual, study it." And as it went on, even after the war, they offered a lot of classes. And so I was able to go into different classes.

MK: So what kind of work did you do?

RY: I started off with salesclerk [at Fort Ruger with the Hawaiian Army Exchange, now known as AAFES-Hawai'i, or Army and Air Force Exchange Service-Hawai'i]. This manager used to teach me a lot. So when there was a job opening to manage the [Fort] DeRussy Exchange, she said, "Take it, you can do it."

So would you believe it, I took it and I stayed on and on, until I got married [to Harry Yamaguchi in 1949] and I was going to go on to maternity leave. And so I had to quit, because I went on maternity leave. And my husband was against leaving the baby with somebody else, "No you stay home and take care of the baby."

Then I had---the first one was Dennis [*born in 1952*] and I had Theresa [*in 1954*]. So I stayed home to take care of them. But then, the officer in charge was real nice. He said he's gonna give me a letter of recommendation, "In case you wanna come back anytime." He gave me an award and he gave me the letter. He said, "You can come back anytime."

So then, by then, my husband had started working at Pearl Harbor [*Naval Shipyard*]. So we decided to buy a home. And now, Dennis was already starting school, and Theresa was about four years old. So my sister-in-law, who lived next door, said, you know—she couldn't go to work 'cause she had another baby. So she said she would watch Theresa and Dennis after school, "You go to work."

So I went back to the exchange. And so I went back as a salesclerk, so that way, in case the kids were sick, it was easy for me to take off. And I know that you're not going to stay there after eight hours, I'm going to come home. So he says, "All right, if that's your job, then take it."

So we were able to buy this home. And my sister-in-law took care of my kids. And within a year, she had bought a home and the kids were going to go to Pearl City [*Elementary*] School anyway. So she was able to take care of the kids too. And now, working at [*Fort*] Shafter, now, a man who had a high position in the exchange service got to be manager of this company in town. And he asked me to come and work for him. So after thinking about it, I said, "All right."

So I went to work for him. But within three years, (although) he was a young man, he was dying of cancer. And he could not fight the cancer, and he died. Then there were series of different bosses coming in, so, but in the meantime, my friend called me. She said, "There's an opening in the exchange system at Hickam [Air Force Base], it's in the office. Why don't you take it?"

And I knew the boss. And he said, "Go apply for the job. Come back to the exchange."

And at her coaxing, I decided to come back to the exchange. Thereafter, I went to work in the office.

MK: Oh.

RY: Yeah.

MK: And you stayed with the exchange system [*AAFES-Hawai`i*].

RY: Yeah, I stayed with it. So that with the total years that they had given me credit, it was, I put in thirty-six years.

MK: Wow, long time, yeah.

RY: So I went from administration clerk and operation clerk, and yeah. And there were lot of times that headquarters would have openings, and they would tell me, you know, "Take the opening. You can do it."

But then on my second time, I thought to myself, now I'm getting older, you know, I would rather stay where I enjoy the group and the work hours were real good. And it was from Monday to Friday, and at the depot we would start at seven and quit earlier. At one time, we even started six-thirty. But then, some of the younger mothers, who had younger kids, it was difficult for them. So they decided, all right, some can start at 7:00 and 7:30, and the hours were ideal. It was so close for me to go to Hickam, or even to Sand Island. So I said, "No, I'll just stay put."

But stayed with it for thirty-six years, after the initial employment.

MK: So you retired in what year?

RY: Nineteen eighty-seven.

MK: And I noticed that, like, you worked for the federal government [*exchange system*], yeah?

RY: Mm hm.

MK: And your brothers, they volunteered for military service.

RY: Mm hm.

MK: Did they ever voice their feelings about volunteering for military service, while, you know, your family had been displaced by the federal government during the war?

RY: That was the strange part. My brothers all volunteered, and even when the Vietnam War started—of course Ken didn't know anything, he didn't know much about the evacuation. We never talked about it. He knew we got evacuated, but the family didn't emphasize their life on it. What's past is past. And my mother never used to discuss all those things that we had gone through. And so my brothers never thought too much about it. But they thought as being boys, you know, they had to do their duty to their country. Because, after the war, the Korean conflict came up. And now, like, Richard was caught in that Berlin Crisis, where Berlin was divided. And the only thing, the planes could go in to go into the western section of Berlin. He was in that. And I remember one time he wrote home, said that the plane that they were on, they changed crews. They were supposed to continue on, but then the

officer says, "No, get off," they'll put another crew in it. And they were able to rest.

But the plane crew that went on that plane crashed. And my brother wrote saying that he was supposed to be on that plane until the officers decided that crew needed rest, so he had put in a replacement crew. He said, "Would you believe it, that plane crashed."

And that was the only time I remember he said he got real shaken up. But other than that, now, looking back, we said, "Oh my goodness, the military evacuated us. The military took over everything, we lost everything to the military. And yet, all three girls were employed by the military."

MK: And all the sons.

RY: All three girls retired from the government. And so we---one day, we were talking about it. We had to laugh about it. Oh, you know, the military did injustice to us, and yet the military gave us employment. The military gave us retirement, and we benefit from that now. We talked about it and I said, "You know, out of the misfortune, a good fortune came by."

MK: Kind of ironic, yeah.

RY: Yeah, that's just what we said, "How ironic, the military did so much to us, and yet the military employed us and we were able to retire." So all three girls get good benefits from retiring from the government.

MK: And the four—all boys went to military service, voluntarily.

RY: Went to, yes, mm hm, yeah.

MK: Now, another question I wanted to ask, you know, about that time, I think you mentioned that, like, your father was a nisei. He had dual citizenship though.

RY: Yes.

MK: He had Japanese citizenship and American citizenship.

RY: Yes.

MK: And what happened to his citizenship status. I think you talked about there was a big uproar in your household that you remember.

RY: I remember one time, oh, *Babachan* was so upset and *Babachan* was scolding my father. And I remember asking my mother, "Why is *Babachan* so mad?" You know.

And she say, "It's because your father found out he had dual citizenship." And in those days, as a youngster, you didn't think too much about what's

dual citizenship. My mother said, "He is born in America, he is an American citizen, yet he's registered in Japan. So Japan can call him into the army, anytime they want to."

I said, "No they cannot, he's an American citizen. No way can Japan call him and say."

"No, when you're a dual citizenship, you must report what your status is."

So upon finding that out, my father went down to the Japanese consulate, cut off his dual citizen. He told them, "No, I'm an American citizen, I'm not a Japanese citizen."

And he came home with the paper. And when my grandmother found that out, oh, she was so angry. I remember her scolding him and she was grumbling, and so much commotion. Then I found---and I thought my father did the right thing. But there was another part to it that we didn't understand, it was my grandmother's part. She said that he being the only child, and he was the male child, he, the property in Japan was in his name, but when he did that, Japan no longer was obligated to have that land for him. And so she said, in other words, she has no home.

MK: Oh.

RY: That she has no home, that she won't be able to go back to Japan. And I remember comforting her. I said, "*Bachan*, you don't need to go back to Japan." You know. For us, we're thinking that, oh, *Babachan* no way you—no, no, no, you cannot go to Japan. You have to stay here with us. But as a child, you don't understand a person's feeling their homeland is their homeland, you know. And we used to comfort, "*Babachan, shinpai nai*" ("Grandma, no problem"), you know. "You're gonna stay here, live here with us. You don't need to go to Japan. Japan *dare mo oran kara. Kaeren demo e*" ("You're gonna stay here, live with us. You don't need to go to Japan. In Japan you have no one there. You don't have to return"). You see.

But we didn't understand her part, that she is a Japanese, and her homeland is Japan. But she is trying to tell us that when my dad did that, now she cannot go back to Japan. You see, but what we didn't understand was that she has no right to go home to her homeland now, to that family. She no longer has ties because her husband is dead. She was an Ishibashi. Her husband died, but as long as that land was in my father's name, he was still an Ishibashi. Japan doesn't think too much about a female who's a widow. And if her son, or there's no family ties now with Japan, they don't think much about you coming back to that family, you see. That was the part, as a child, I didn't understand until, as you grew older, and you started to read a lot of Japanese books, you know. And that's how Japan is. That it made a lot of difference. And I didn't know how much that was stressed until I heard about my mother-in-law's thing. That once you're a widow, you know, that family has no ties with you, yeah. Especially if you did not have a child carrying on the name. So it seemed as though she had cut—when my father

did that, all ties with the Ishibashi family was cut off to her.

MK: And your father did this before World War II started.

RY: Right, right.

MK: Cutting off the citizenship.

RY: It was in 1940, mm hm.

MK: And it was in 1940 that your father was a milkman, yeah, a dairyman at Hind-Clarke.

RY: Yes.

MK: And he took out a loan from the Farm Security Administration [*U.S. Department of Agriculture*]?

RY: He took out a loan with the Farm Security Administration and purchased the land there.

MK: Okay, I was wondering, why did he take out that loan to purchase land in Pu`uloa? Why did he want to get, go into farming at that time?

RY: Well, it seemed as though farming was coming up. And but on his own, he figured that he could not just go and buy land. And when he heard that Pu`uloa was being opened and Farm Security Administration was opened, that's how he got into it. [*At that time, Hind-Clarke Dairy was in transition. There was a change in management.*] And the thing in those days, in the late thirties, forties, unions were coming up. And he knew that the union was trying to get into the dairy. And he thought that maybe he would be better off, the way things were going, that if he goes into farming, and have his own land. You see.

MK: Oh, I see.

RY: While living at, now, Hind-Clarke, my grandmother having chickens, she was a chicken farmer. And I remember my father was starting to buy pigs. And started to fence up, you know, an area. And he was taking care of the pigs part-time. And I think that's when he decided that farming would be the best thing. And pig farming was coming up, you see. So he had started to buy some prize pigs.

MK: And, you know, when he took out the loan, do you know about how much of a loan he took out?

RY: According to the documents, I found out he and my mom had signed for 9.1 acres of land, and plus the house, the brand-new house that was being built. I thought (it) read \$5,000.

MK: And I was wondering, how come he bought land out in Pu`uloa? It seemed so far away from where he was accustomed to.

RY: Well, I thought it was because farmland already was being scarce. Because, like, Hind-Clarke Dairy, no way was he able to—I thought maybe he wasn't able to buy land there. And most of the land at that time was owned by Bishop [*Estate*]. Bishop, Campbell Estate, Dowsett [*Estate*]. But then, that land was owned by Dowsett. And Farm Security Administration was able to purchase it for farm purposes, (from) Dowsett. I don't think there were too many land open to Japanese people. But Dowsett in Pu`uloa was open, that was one area.

MK: And how big was the property again, that he purchased?

RY: He had two lots, and the total came out to 9.1 acres.

MK: In comparison to other people who bought lots in Pu`uloa, is that a lot or regular, or . . .

RY: The average, I found out was—the average family had about five acres. So my dad's acres was large, and at that time, I didn't think anything of it. But I used to complain that, “How come, you know, the neighbors are so far?” You know, why couldn't they be next door?

And I remember my father was saying it's because he has double lots. The [*lots numbered*] 680, 681, he had purchased two lots. And so naturally, being double lots, the neighbors are gonna be far. But we didn't think of it in terms of acres. I said, “But Dad, you know, how come our neighbors are so far?”

MK: So, you know, in that beginning, when he first bought the land, what was there at Pu`uloa, when he first bought it, before you folks actually moved there? What was it like?

RY: It was nothing but rocks and *kiawe* trees. It was just miles and miles and miles of *kiawe* trees. So each farmer had to cut down *kiawe* trees, clear the land, uproot all those *kiawe* trees.

MK: So it wasn't just cutting it down . . .

RY: It was nothing but . . .

MK: . . . it meant uprooting . . .

RY: No.

MK: . . . digging them out.

RY: To even build a home, you had to uproot all that *kiawe* roots, clear the land first. It was hard work. I remember my father's friend going weekends with their trucks. And I understand they used to pull the roots after cutting it

down, hauling it to one side. They had to uproot the roots now, with the truck. And after that, my sister said, oh, she remembers all those rocks. No matter how many rocks you moved, it was so much rocks. My father built a stone wall for the pigs, that you could build a stone wall out of all the rocks, from your own property. And there was so much trees, they would cut the trees, cut the lumber to make fences. You would be able to make walls and fences using the *kiawe* trees and the rocks from your own property.

MK: Oh. And before you folks moved there, were there anything like roads or water, or what was there?

RY: Each farmer had to dig a well. It was just brackish water. But each farmer had to dig a well and have a pump going, for irrigation or for water. But there were roads, I remember it was dusty, coral-looking roads. And there was another road on the side of our house for our next-door neighbor and the neighbor before them. And it was all dusty roads. But each farmer had to dig a well and have a pump going to get the brackish water. You see, each farmer had put in a lot of work, hard work.

MK: So even before your family actually moved there, your dad had cleared the land.

RY: Yes.

MK: And he had dug his well.

RY: He had dug his well. And the land that had to be cleared more was before the house got built. So there was a brand-new house. (Most) farmers had a brand-new house.

MK: And how was the house built? Did they contract with a private contractor to build it, or how was the arrangement?

RY: I think it was private contractors through the farm agency [*Farm Security Administration*], and part of the loans. And it was a beautiful house. It had a separate dining room, a living room, three bedrooms. And I remember the bathroom—my dad made it so that you go down the steps, and there would be a cement floor with shower and a bath, and where the laundry bin was, you know, where my mother's washing machine would go. So even no matter how dirty you came in the house, you could wash yourself first. And then, before coming into the house. It was like, what they call now, a mudroom. Yeah, yeah. And I really thought, oh, how appropriate, the name, mudroom, you know. Wash off all your mud in there.

But it was a nice house with a kitchen and---mm hm.

MK: And then, before you folks got in, was there electricity?

RY: Yeah, there was electricity. There was electricity running. So we did have electricity, 'cause we had a refrigerator and Mom had an electric stove. Mm

hm. And we had electric lights. But it was just the drinking water, you had to go to a pumping station run by the `Ewa Plantation [*Company*]. So there would be containers, my father would have like a tank thing with water. And the drinking water and cooking would use fresh water.

MK: How far away would you have to go for that water?

RY: Oh, I would say maybe about two miles. My dad knew where the pumping station was. It was in the middle of a cane field, and all the farmers went to go get their water there.

MK: So all he had on his own lot would be the brackish water for the crops.

RY: For the crops and the, for the farm. And, now this---the brackish water was into our plumbing, because the toilets and the dishes and everything would be. But I remember, they say it's brackish water, but it wasn't dirty water. Wasn't dirty water. But, of course, if you taste it, you know, you could taste salt, salt water in it. But we could do dishes and everything with that.

MK: Like bathing?

RY: Yeah. But the cooking and drinking, my father would always say, you know, "Drink it from this bottle." You know. I remember he had some kind of bottle thing. Yeah, uh huh.

MK: And the house itself was really nice, though.

RY: It was a beautiful house. And it was large house. And I told my dad, I still remember that French doorway, you know, the curved doorway, between the living room and the dining room. That I remembered.

MK: Did other people's houses look like that too, in that area? Were they, you know, of that grade?

RY: Yeah, yes. Everybody's homes were that. I imagine some of the farmers that was living way toward the highway, they had a different-looking homes. I imagine they had purchased the land earlier, probably not through Farm Security, or leased it, and they had different types of homes. But almost all the Farm Security homes were nice homes. They were nice homes.

MK: And the homes were contracted and built by carpenters then.

RY: Yes.

MK: Not the people who were gonna live there.

RY: No, no. Maybe some of 'em had built---maybe some of 'em had friends and they built their own. But my father had to contract it out. But he had friends to help clear the land. So the first part I think he had cleared was where the home was gonna be built and where the yard would be, 'cause all that area,

to the road, was cleared. And further down was cleared, and the next one he cleared was the farm area, you know, where his piggery would be in.

MK: And, now I know that before you folks moved there, your father would go on the weekends.

RY: He would go weekends or, because he was a milkman, he started early in the morning, he would get off early, and he would be going down. So we never got to see him too much, until late, yeah, when he would come home.

MK: And it would be like---do you know about how many weekends he spent doing that, investing his time, preparing the place?

RY: It went on for months because on Fridays, he used to take my sister and my brothers and sometimes *Babachan* would go, after the home was built, because they have a place to stay. You know, he had moved some of the things, and they could sleep there. And his friends, like Mr. Ishibashi—he was no relative—and another man, he asked if he could hire them. And they lived in the house and they helped him with the land.

MK: He did a lot then.

RY: Yeah. There was a lot of work done before the initial move.

MK: And so did your father work for Hind-Clarke Dairy until the time you folks moved?

RY: He worked until the time we moved, then he gave notice to him. Mm hmm, yeah.

MK: When were you folks told that, you know, that your father had bought the land and that you're gonna move to this farm in Pu`uloa?

RY: It was sometime in 1940, and by the summer I found out that we're gonna have to move and change school. And when you're that age, you know, you're very sensitive about starting at another school, making new friends, leaving old friends behind. And that was sort of traumatic for me. My brothers didn't think much about it. You know, they were younger. And I said, "No, Dad. No, I'm not gonna move, you know. I wanna stay here."

He said, "You can't stay here. Nobody's gonna be here."

I said, "But I'm not gonna move!"

And he would say, "You have to move, 'cause we're gonna all move."

So once I made up my mind, well, you know, to help my mom pack and everything, once you made up your mind, it wasn't that bad.

MK: And when did you folks actually move?

RY: In August of 1941.

MK: And when you folks moved to Pu`uloa, how did you folks do it? You know, nowadays we have moving companies that will help people move, you know. What did you folks have to do to move down to Pu`uloa?

RY: Well, my dad had owned a pickup truck, and he had owned a station wagon. So each time he was moving several things, each time he made a trip there, he took some things along. And most of the furniture that he had bought was new there. Either new or secondhand, but it was entirely different set of furnitures.

MK: Oh.

RY: You see. And the beds and everything. So that part was easy, he just had taken it there, directly. So there wasn't too much things left in our house, anyway, except for old tables and things, but he had bought a new dining room table, and the living room set was new. So we didn't have to move too much furnitures, it was just personal things, clothing, beddings, dishes, pots and pans. And my mother's *tansu*, and some of the beds and like a chest of drawers, some of 'em, we had to move. But he had bought additional ones, so it was all in the house already.

MK: And was it just the family that helped with the move, or did other people help you folks move?

RY: I remember other people, his friends, were---there was another man who had a truck, I remember he used to move a lot of stuff. He would load his truck before he goes with my father, and unload it there, and he would help him with the farm.

MK: And then, when you folks were leaving Pu`uloa, did you have farewells to say to your—I mean, when you left Wailupe, did you have farewells to say to the people that . . .

RY: Oh yes. Some of my friends had already—like, the Mrs. Tamashiro, she had moved out already. She had lived in Wai`alae area in the `O`ili [*Road*] area. And I remember we had gone to see her. And Mrs. Tamashiro, being the person she is, she made a big lunch and, you know, fed all of us, and I used to love the way she used to cook her pork with cabbage. And she made a big pot of it and cooked rice. She said, “No, you must stay for lunch.” And I remember we stayed for lunch.

It was sad to say goodbye to friends like Mrs. Tamashiro.

END OF INTERVIEW